



# News Release

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**WOOD RIVER WATER USERS CONCERNED**  
**ABOUT USE OF DOMESTIC WATER FOR IRRIGATION**

For Immediate Release  
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Concerns are being raised by Wood River valley farmers, irrigators and other water right holders about what they describe as a growing number of homeowners and organizations that appear to be violating Idaho water law by using water from a well drilled for domestic use to irrigate more than half an acre of land without a valid water right, the Idaho Department of Water Resources said today.

State water managers met last week with a group of Silver Creek and Wood River Valley water users who are raising red flags about the situation. They told IDWR officials that the problem appears particularly prevalent in areas of small ranchettes, parcels of land typically 3-5 acres in size, an increasingly popular attraction for up-scale homes, and in subdivision common areas and berms.

Water users are concerned that their senior water rights are being hurt by the illegal ground water use. Studies show that using ground water tributary to streams can reduce flow levels because it reduces the amount of water that makes its way to streams and rivers. Consequently, Wood River Valley surface water users with valid water rights up to 100 years old for the Big Wood River and Silver Creek find their water supplies being curtailed due to low stream flows while new domestic ground water users continue to use water that feeds the streams.

Under Idaho law, irrigating more than one-half acre of land from a domestic well without an appropriate water right amounts to illegal diversion of water and subjects the person to being issued a notice of violation and the assessment of civil penalties. Officials say people or subdivisions that fall in this category must either stop irrigating more than half an acre of land or obtain a valid water right to irrigate the extra land.

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IDWR believes property owners not familiar with Idaho water law may mistakenly believe that a domestic well can be used to supply groundwater to the home and to irrigate pasture land, supply water for aesthetic or wildlife storage ponds or to water landscaping throughout the entire property

A provision in Idaho water law gives a property owner who obtains a permit to drill a well the right to use that water for household uses, to irrigate up to 1/2-acre of land, to water a limited number of stock, and certain other uses, up to a maximum of 13,000 gallons per day. A recorded water right is not required in these instances.

However, the law specifies that a maximum of one-half acre of land can be irrigated from a domestic supply. Irrigating more land than one-half acre from a domestic well without an appropriate irrigation water right amounts to diverting water illegally.

Idaho newcomers often believe buying property in the state automatically gives them a valid Idaho water right or that the presence of a well means an unrestricted water right exists. However, neither is true. Just because the property has a well does not automatically mean there are valid rights to use that water to irrigate more than 1/2-acre of land, agents caution.

Just buying a piece of property also does not entitle the owner to use water for activities that require a water right. For that to happen, a n existing water right for the property must be included when the property is purchased.

For more information on the subject, contact the IDWR Southern Regional Office in Twin Falls. The telephone number is (208) 736-3033. You can also get more information about water rights on the IDWR web site at [www.idwr.state.id.us](http://www.idwr.state.id.us)